

Hamilton Development Corporation
December 16, 2015

The Hamilton Development Corporation met at Hamilton Town Hall at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 16, 2015 with Rick Mitchell, Bill Gisness, Dave Carey, Brian Stein, Anthony Nickas present. Community Projects Coordinator Dorr Fox, and Selectmen Marc Johnson and Jeff Hubbard also present.

Call to order

Brian Stein called the HDC meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Approve warrant #1610

Dave Carey moved to approve HDC warrant #1610 in the amount of \$2,205.79 for mortgage, Harborlight fee, minutes recording time. Bill Gisness seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

North Shore Nordic Association

Discussion ensued with Tom Catalano about North Shore Nordic Association that will use existing trail network in Hamilton as a cross country skiing network. Fundraising is being done to acquire a specific grooming snowmobile and attachment to groom portions of Discover Hamilton trails network. Town Manager Michael Lombardo has agreed to permit this use and the Association can meet the insurance requirement.

The proposed groomed cross country skiing network will start in Patton Park, with a loop around park and edge of Myopia's schooling field to be lit for night time skiing. The skiing trail will continue across the schooling field to grass rides at Appleton Farm, and possibly behind the Winthrop family land, across Pingree School property into Bradley Palmer State Park and Willowdale Estate forest. If carried out in its entirety this would be the largest cross country ski area in eastern Massachusetts. There is a minimum of 30 kilometers of trails planned and more depending upon volunteer time to groom trails. The 501(3)c Association has received donations and its primary sponsor is Craft Sportswear of Beverly. The Association is currently falling short of its sponsorship requirement but Catalano noted that such a skiing network would be a benefit to the Hamilton business district in the winter.

He mentioned that the average cross country skier household typically has an income of \$100,000, 85% is college educated and affluent. The other cross country skiing options in

eastern Massachusetts are found in Weston and Carlisle, 27 miles from Hamilton. The proposed ski area in Town will be attractive to serious skiers because of the varied terrain. Some reluctance is being realized from the landowners where the trail could pass through their properties due to possibility of outsiders coming to Town. Although these outsiders would likely use the local shops and restaurants.

The Association is looking for a small financial grant from the HDC (\$2,500) which could be applied toward turning the lights on (this will allow for night skiing after workdays) and a port-a-potty is needed. A plowed parking area would be maintained.

The proposal is receiving publicity through newspaper articles in the HW Chronicle and Salem News. The New England Nordic Ski Association has featured the proposal on its website. The North Shore Nordic Association has contacted similar clubs and joined with a trade association.

In regard to the Association's fundraising effort, \$15,000 was raised so far and \$35,000 is projected to kick-off the program with an expected \$8,000 a year ongoing maintenance cost. The first year will focus on start-up and following years will be tied into youth ski program from the HW Recreation Department. While the barn/garage/warming hut is still at Patton Park it will be used for program. The Association has a seven member board consisting of five Hamilton residents and two from Wenham.

A sign will be located at the trailhead containing list of sponsors and the list will also be seen on equipment and a storage trailer. Catalano explained that he and his wife loaned the money to purchase the snowmobile and made a \$5,000 donation. A deposit is on the groomer and a \$2,500 contribution from the HDC would enable the Association to have it available when there is snow on the ground. Catalano will send an information package via email to the HDC containing budget, amount of money raised thus far, a trail map, and link to website NSNordic.org. The Association has been working with ECTA, ECGA (which has land behind Pingree reservation), TTOR and DCR. Chebacco Woods Land Management Committee is also interested in making an exception for the snowmobile to be used on its land as a maintenance vehicle. This cross country skiing trails are likely to be widely used by families and individual residents in Town.

Discussion ensued about how the Association's proposal would benefit local businesses in Town. The HDC will check with its attorney to see if its charter allows the Corporation to make a donation as a sponsor. Also noted was if the HW Recreation Department could budget any funds for the program.

Discussion with Andrew DeFranza, re: interest in 59/63 Willow Street

Discussion ensued with Andrew DeFranza, executive director for Harborlight Community Partners (one of the developers sent a pre-RFP), to understand what is feasible for development of the property. It was noted that the Willow Street property is a good site for the downtown but due to its size there are constraints including topography and wetness in the back corner after heavy rains. A development would be driven by volume of use on the site. The size of the site would make it unlikely that wastewater, mixed use and parking could be accommodated. He noted that the YMCA might be interested in partnering with Harborlight rather than as a sole party responsible for any development at the site. Harborlight is willing to consider any structure of partnership.

DeFranza suggested that commercial could be done on a first floor and residential on a second floor. He said to accommodate infrastructure such as wastewater system and parking then density, probably more than the HDC would prefer, would drive the development. He reiterated that the small size of the site has complexity which might not result in interest from some developers. He suggested that the HDC could consider mitigating cost of infrastructure (i.e., CPA funding), and allocate wastewater as well as parking as a set aside of the property development relative to reality of economic density not driving development incentive at the site.

Discussion addressed how the HDC should prioritize what it wants the most at the site (i.e., housing, retail, wastewater) and there should be a scoring system in the RFP (with points assigned for creative solutions: additional parking spots). Other considerations are operational reality over time such as costs for insurance, plowing, septic system. Financial enticements that offset variance in costs such as land donation would yield the best use. The complexity of the permitting in a small town with potential for review by many boards (i.e., Planning Board, Board of Health, Zoning Board of Appeals) would be evaluated by potential developer so any assistance from HDC would be beneficial.

Discussion was on if commercial building on the site would remain and if the historical significance of this former school building would be valuable to anyone. DeFranza thought the tight size of the site would not be conducive to keeping commercial building or house when determining how to put commercial and residential use on the property especially relative to market demand/economic feasibility for rental space in the area. DeFranza opined that the marketability of Hamilton was excellent for housing (i.e., apartment or condominium) and commercial cost per square foot was not as good. Discussion addressed how other commercial property owners in Town could shed light on market rate for office space in Town. DeFranza mentioned that market for retail

space is better than it has been. He added that it is advantageous to locate apartments close to the train and downtown but to be affordable housing density under 20 units would be difficult, one to two bedrooms for downsizing seniors or young adults is more probable. Also mentioned was transit oriented development funding and proximity to train would help a developer interested in capital for such a project who would initiate this with the state (i.e., 40R district, an overlay would be moved forward by Selectmen).

Discussion addressed if a 99-year lease would leverage infrastructure and if there could be long term revenue associated with bonding. DeFranza noted that the RFP used for the McKay School in Beverly would be beneficial for HDC to use to create its RFP for Willow Street property especially the scoring system and financial model (Anthony Nickas could evaluate the financial models for RFP). A consultant may be needed for the HDC to understand if it wants to lease or sell the land and how this should be structured.

Discussion was on how the HDC should research Transit Oriented Development (TOD) more thoroughly to understand if it would be feasible for Willow Street property development as well as if there are state grants available for septic systems.

Downtown improvements

Discussion ensued about list for suggested maintenance items downtown to be paid for with \$6,500 from meals tax annual contribution from the HDC such as cleaning of sidewalks, control of weeds during summer, better signage, lighting, parking, and the addition of flowers, and banners. The Town and HDC would have to collaboratively support any such effort.

Discussion was on how the list of items needs to be prioritized and the HDC has to identify what would be focused on first (i.e., connectivity in the downtown such as sidewalks and crosswalks as well as marketing). A ranking would be done to create an action plan to tie in with the Town's long term plan. Rick Mitchell will create the plan to be reviewed by the HDC which will include matrix of priorities, responsibility and timeline.

Potential grant possibilities: MAPC and North of Boston.org

Dorr Fox reported on North of Boston.org's matching fund program with up to \$4,000 grant availability based on value of a program (i.e., branding). Annual membership dues is \$250 and application form is required in January. The MAPC option was less clear and an email was received on grant program to create a plan for sidewalks, bike

paths, etc. Town of Hamilton would receive a grant and Town would pay MAPC to create plan. The HDC concurred that it could develop a plan of this type independently from using MAPC.

Carey moved to authorize spending \$250 for annual membership to North of Boston.org. Mitchell seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

This membership cost will be paid for in the HDC's next warrant at its meeting on January 6. Fox will complete the application and get comments from the Corporation members so the HDC can vote on it during the next meeting.

Mitchell moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 a.m. Carey seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: _____
Brian Stein, President